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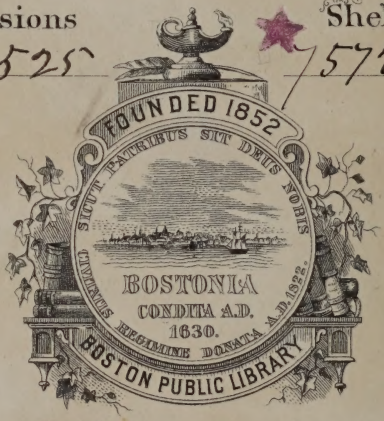

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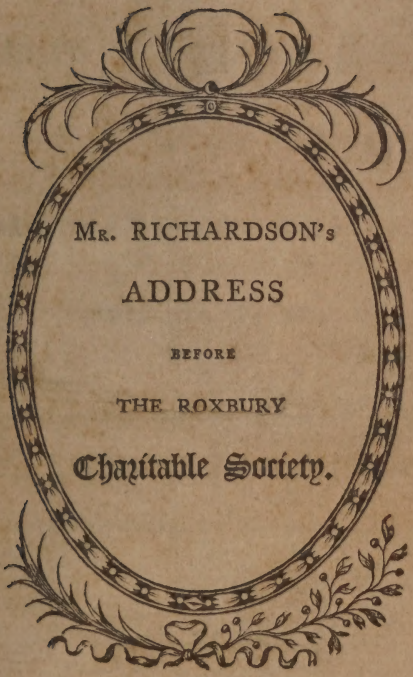
Mr. RICHARDSON's
ADDRESS
BEFORE
THE ROXBURY
Charitable Society.

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AN

ADDRESS,

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Roxbury Charitable Society,

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1804.

By LUTHER RICHARDSON.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY MUNROE & FRANCIS,

No. 7, Court-Street.....1804.

AT a meeting of the members of the ROXBURY CHARITABLE SOCIETY, on the 17th Sept. 1804:

Voted....That the Hon. JOHN READ, Esq. the Rev. ELIPHALET PORTER, and JOSEPH RUGGLES, Esq. be a committee to wait on LUTHER RICHARDSON, Esq. and return him the thanks of the Society for the Address delivered at their desire by him this day, and to request of him a copy for the press.

NATH. RUGGLES, SEC'RY.

Address.

FOREVER soaring on the wings of desire to imaginary bliss, the pride of creation, and the sovereign of the world; yet self-subjected to the tyranny of passion, the sport of fortune, and the child of frailty—With a mind, unbounded as the universe, and commensurate with eternity; yet chained down by nature to mortality—Coursing on the fiery chariot of ambition to immortal fame, while trembling on the brink of infamy and destruction—is the fate of mortals.

While we contemplate the awful scene of human vicissitude, nature would revolt at the frightful thought, did not religion cheer the desponding mind, and "justify the ways of God to man." She points us to philanthropy, as the golden chain, which

which unites these adverse destinies; while heaven-born charity fills the hideous chasm; and divine benevolence, like a boundless ocean, laves either shore with its peaceful waves.

Let us then celebrate the progress of philanthropy and the triumphs of humanity. A theme which will unite all hearts, and call forth the joyful acclamations of all tongues. What subject can be more worthy of divine eulogium....what place so appropriate, as the temple of our God?....for surely the altar of our religion is the throne of charity. Friends of humanity! approach, and begin the holy ordinance. Come and sanctify your prosperity by your charity. Come, meek in spirit, and effusive with compassion, in humble imitation of him, whose whole life was charity, whose death was divine benevolence. Let inspiration swell our joyful theme; let plaintive pity sweep her heaven-strung lyre; and devotion strike the harp of God.

The history of human life is but the sad tale of misery and wo. The government even of the moral, as well, as of the physical world, seems at times to frail mortals, to have been the sport of chance, and the offspring of confusion. Even elements, which surround and support us, are charged with ruin and destruction. The honest earnings of a life of industry often vanish into flames; or are ravished

ed by the perils of commerce, or the perfidy of friendship. The pale messengers of sickness and calamity advance with unerring step, and enter, uninvited, equally the circle of youth, and the chamber of age. To lessen, then, the innumerable ills of life; to increase the circle of human felicities; to alleviate the miseries of the afflicted with cheerfulness and discretion, according to our ability, is the duty of every rational being. This is all that misery can require; and charity and religion can ask no more.

In running over the mouldering pages of antiquity the science of war, and the triumphs of victory, seem to have been the only foundation of individual greatness, and national glory. Disdaining the milder arts and social virtues, the prosperity and happiness of one empire was effected only, by the subjugation and slavery of the world. Antiquity has been profuse in handing down to us the monuments of her sanguinary atchievements, and martial fame; but not a single trophy, not even a mouldering column, to commemorate the rights of humanity. Even in their religion, their goddess Minerva was but the waiting maid of Mars; and the tranquil voice of Ceres was always drowned in the thunders of their Jove. But modern times have demonstrated, that the peaceful arts and agriculture, are the only sure foundation of national prosperity. They are the

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nerves and sinews of national strength, and commerce the arteries of national wealth. Modern wars are waged, not so much with the spirit of conquest, as to cripple the overgrown power of a rival; not so much to overcome by victory, as to ruin by expence of prosecution.

Let antiquity boaſt of her sanguinary conquerors, covered with the crimson laurels of victory, and assign them the highest seat in her pantheon of fame. We revere her venerable pride. But the present era can produce as exalted patriotism, superadded to the most disinterested philanthropy. With them we shrink not to compare the milder and humbler virtues of the divine Fenelon, the intuitive Newton, the profound Locke, the philanthropic Howard—and in the present age our sainted Washington, the incorruptible Lawrens and Reed, the inventive Franklin, the ſcientific and liberal Bowdoin, the patriotic Hancock, the benevolent Russel—and, pardon my tears, when I add to these, those venerable patrons of this institution, and humanity, your Sumner, and your Lowell. These men seem born not for themselves, but for their country, and mankind. They have exalted the human character; while their lives have been an illustrious comment on the truths of the christian religion, and of its divine fruits in man. Alexander spread havoc and destruction over the face of the globe, and sighed for new worlds to conquer—

but

but these have enlarged the empire of humanity, anxious only to do good. Cæsar reduced the earth to slavery—but these have made mankind happy.

By calling back antiquity into view, we gain a prophetic vision of futurity; and by the scrutiny of past actions we gain the probable result of future events. From frequently contemplating the grateful deeds of our illustrious dead, we imitate them without knowing it; and are led to prefer the triumphs of virtue, and the rewards of religion, to the sanguinary laurels of military fame. The glory of good men sheds a lustre on all around them. They are the equal claim of the whole human race. For surely those who live for all mankind are deserving of greater glory than those who die for their country. Their memory is still held in sweet remembrance when they are no more. Their examples are a rich legacy bequeathed to all posterity. In them still glows the sacred fire of charity—in them still burns the holy flame of patriotism—their blaze of glory still brightens pointing the way to immortality.

Our happy country, leaping from the cradle of infancy, has advanced towards manhood with gigantic strides, and in the short space of thirty years has acquired the improvements of a century, in the ordinary progress of nations. Individual enterprize has not only been successfully exerted, but the united

efforts and energies of talent and genius have been associated, and called into action. Institutions for the promotion of every laudable attainment, have been organized and encouraged. By the aid of these science has pushed her researches to the utmost barriers of creation. Commerce has spread her golden wings over the bosom of the deep; no distant country remains unfrequented; no solitary island unvisited. The monsters of the ocean, fleeing for refuge to the channels of the deep, find no safety from the persecution of our adventurous seamen; and mighty leviathan, in his pavilions of ice, is but the manly sport of our hardy mariners. The peaceful arts and agriculture lead health and plenty in their joyful train. The holy missionary of our religion, regardless of toil, and fearless of danger, has pierced the Western wilderness, to bear the banners of our God, and to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. The fierce and savage warrior, forgetting his native ferocity, and throwing down his deadly weapons of destruction, bows with reverence before the cross of Jesus, and owns the Saviour of the world.

Among these institutions, founded upon the purest principles of disinterested charity and christian benevolence, is the one, whose anniversary we now commemorate. Let us then cherish it as the tender object of our anxious care; as the favourite child of our fond delight. Here may we learn "to feel another's wo"—

wo"—To soothe the poignancy of human maladies; to wipe the tears from affliction and distress; to strew with flowers the brink of the grave; and deprive mortality of half its terrors.

It was these fraternal institutions which first associated our patriot ancestors and enabled them to flee from the cruel hand of persecution;—which wrested this land amid a thousand perils from its savage empire and gave us a country;—which watched over and protected our infant nation when the howling wolf prowled around her cradle and barbarous foes thirsted for her youthful blood.

By the aids of charity and the bounties of benevolence our temples of worship arose amid a solitary wilderness, and our schools of literature flourished beside the dreary wigwam. Our pious forefathers, always intent on the good of posterity, knew, that to preserve a nation virtuous would insure them to be powerful; and to make them wise, would render them happy. A holy zeal for the promotion of human knowledge, and the truths of revelation, always glowed in their patriot bosoms, whispering peace to conscience, and good will to all men.

Though these fraternal institutions, when founded in virtue, and conducted with discretion, insure the happiest consequences, when perverted they are productive

ductive of the most deleterious effects. In the fairest portion of Europe their influence has been distressing to humanity. We have there seen them converted into the pandemonia of faction and schools of atheism. By their poisonous evaporations we have seen the whole face of society drawn into convulsions, and mankind tossing and writhing, in wild delirium. Never, perhaps, in the annals of time, has the ways of providence appeared more dark and mysterious. Every year produces new wonders, every day a new miracle. An angry Deity, to humble the pride, and punish the arrogance of vain mortals, and to demonstrate the folly and mutability of all earthly glory, and human grandeur, seems to have abandoned mankind to their own folly.—We have seen whole "nations shipwrecked on the tempestuous sea of liberty," their thrones and "powers dashed in pieces," and the shores of the whole earth covered with fallen crowns, with broken sceptres, and the wrecks of royalty. The barriers even of the moral, as well as of the political world, seem to have been broken down; and the limits, which divide order from confusion, have been swept away. All the tender ties of nature and consanguinity, and all the amiable charities of life, have been rent asunder and dissolved.

But the elements of society again begin to combine. The baleful comet of revolution is again nearly quenched in the lethean gulf of despotism. That bright

bright luminary, which shed its dazzling influence over mankind, and irradiated the world, now resembles a dreary funeral lamp in the midst of a grave yard, whose glimmering light serves only to shew the mouldering relicts of departed greatness, without the power of inspiring the ashes which it protects. The fiend of tyranny has again arisen, unseen, "behind the smoke of the incense, offered on the altar" of liberty. "Infuriated man, after seeking through blood and slaughter his *long-lost* rights," has again rushed into the arms of despotism, to seek repose on the bosom of slavery. To accomplish this, mankind has endured an age of wo. The earth has been strewed with the bones of its peaceful inhabitants. The ocean still rolls with billows of blood, and the mournful spectre of a slaughtered hero, hovers on every wave. In vain did we hope that permanent peace was restored to contending nations, and tranquillity to mankind. The hope was delusion. Philanthropy has been doomed to receive another wound. The assassin of peace, after sharpening his murderous dagger in secret, has again openly thrust his parricide hand into the bosom of humanity. The tempest of war again gathers blackness in the east—the clouds again rend with the thunders of battle and will drench the earth with showers of blood.—But we leave this degrading scene of splendid misery and turn from it with pity and disgust.

Pardon

Pardon me, O my country, after contrasting thy enviable pre-eminence with the unfortunate nations of Europe, for reminding thee of national sins, yet unrepented of ; and of crimes against philanthropy, yet unexpiated. Let it not be told, that even in America, the boasted asylum of persecuted liberty, deeds of inhumanity are daily sanctioned and committed, which would draw tears from the marble eyes of insensibility, which would suffuse with shame the face of savage cruelty. Let history be silent, and no longer reproach her tyrants with cruelty, since the present age produces *Freemen*, who have enlarged the empire of human misery and oppression, and who commit barbarities for avarice. For the truth of this, I appeal to our devoted victims of Africa, languishing in slavery. I appeal to their inhuman task-masters, whose daily luxuries are mingled with their tears and blood. I call to witness the sordid plunderer of the human race, the infamous robber of mankind, who deliberately enumerates the miseries he is about to commit on the peaceful nations of Africa—What articles will purchase one slave, what fetters will be necessary to chain him on board his ship—what scourgings will be inflicted to compel him to his task—and who calmly counts each drop of blood trickling from his cruel stripes. Is it possible that these enormities are tolerated by a government, whose boasted creed is " equal and exact Justice to all"—With shame and confusion let

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us turn to the charter of our liberties, and with terror and astonishment, like the hand writing upon the wall, read "all men are born free and equal, "and possess certain unalienable rights, among which "is the right of enjoying and defending their lives "and liberties."—Incredible inconsistency of national character! Oh strange depravity of human nature!—The names of liberty and patriotism are a libel upon us. Well might the inimitable Cowper exclaim,

——————"My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick, with ev'ry day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
It does not feel for man; the nat'ral bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colour'd like his own! and, having pow'r
T' enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interpos'd
Make enemies of nations, who had else,
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And, worse than all, and most to be deplor'd,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy, with a bleeding heart,
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.

And

Then what is man? And what man, seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush,
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.
No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation priz'd above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him."

Will any one charge us with impropriety—Will any one say we wander beyond the limits of charity, should we presume to arraign another growing vice, "which threatens to destroy freedom of speech" and the lives of our most valuable citizens? Will this society—will our whole country refuse to join on all occasions in declaring their utter abhorrence, in pouring forth their deepest execration of the murderous practice of duelling? Can offended honor never be appeased but with the blood of its adversary?—Can injured dignity accept no atonement, but human sacrifice?—If not, "wives must still shriek," the orphan must still sob, the parent must still grieve; till some skilful art "strip the fascinating charm" from the foul hand of honorable murder. Let our laws declare it infamous, as well, as capital. Let society denounce it. Let the sighing widow raise her mournful voice against it—and the weeping orphan lisp forth upon it the curses of innocence.

innocence. Let the holy ministers of our religion direct the full torrent of their pious zeal, and call down upon it the anathemas of heaven; till the hideous monster stands confessed in all its malignant horror.

Sensible of the innumerable blessings, which we enjoy, as a nation, and as individuals, may we remember our obligations are many. No pestilence walking in darkness, and wasting at noon day, alarms our cities. No raging war spreads havoc and destruction through our country. But peace and plenty run down our streets like an overflowing stream. Let us then merit these enviable blessings. The voice of charity calls aloud on our gratitude. By refusing to relieve the distress of the indigent, we force them into crimes; we drive them to despair. By withholding our support from the miserable, we rob them of their innocence. Of us will be required the sighs and tears of the suffering widow, and the cries of the orphan. Of us also will be required their crimes. Contempt and neglect even of the infamous ought never to exceed the enormity of their offence; it ought to be directed against the crime rather than the criminal. For surely he, who was not too despicable for God to create and preserve, is not contemptible enough, for man to abandon and despise. Let us always remember that humanity is not confined to climate, nor charity

limited to colour. Let us banish the wants of the needy and the cries of the indigent from our land. Let even our prisons become schools of industry and virtue ; let our alms-houses become the cradle, rather than the grave of the state. " Give unto the poor," for to give is Godlike. Not even one pious sigh, not a drop of water, given in the name of charity, will remain unrewarded. Rise, then, and let us consecrate our prosperity. The altar is ready, the fire is kindled, and nothing is wanting but the sacrifice. Reason and religion approve the pious rites. Come, and let us together taste the luxury of doing good.

(Nov., 1891, 20,000)

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